

RAMBLING PERFINS

by Jonathan Johnson

Usually when stamp collectors talk about rambling they are referring to themselves, myself included. For a turnaround, let's take a look at the Perfin perforators that have done the rambling. It may seem strange that machines ramble, but when it becomes a matter of life or death, a move is certainly preferable.

C19.



Although the Canadian National Railways received Post Office approval to perforate their initials in postage stamps March 13th, 1928, for some reason C19 doesn't come onto the scene until after 1932. The perforator's use seems to have been regular, but definitely not excessive. In 1956 the perforator was pushed aside in the Toronto office by the postage meter.

Sometime in 1957 the perforator was sent to Winnipeg. The perforator was back in the business of perforating stamps, but now in competition with C21a, which had seen continuous use in Winnipeg since 1928. Both perforators were to perforate a good cross-section of the late 1950's commemoratives.

Then came a corporate regional reorganization. The perforator was moved to Edmonton, along with the regional treasury department, in August 1961. Since then the machine has continued to produce nice clean Perfins. It may delight some collectors to know that the Canadian National Railways have no plans to discontinue the practice of perforating their postage stamps.

It is interesting that the C19 perforating machine is not one of the common Cummins perforators. It was made by the Perforator Company, Chicago, Illinois. The model is 6K and the serial number is 6K19. This is the only confirmed non-Cummins perforating machine known to be used in Canada to date. I cannot guess why this model was purchased when the Canadian National had success with its Cummins Model 53's (both C21a and C20a are Model 53's).

C16.



On November 2nd, 1920, the Post Office approved the Perfin "CMS" upon the request of the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company of Canada Limited, Trail, B.C. The perforator, a Cummins Model 52 (Serial Number 2619), saw regular and continuous use

during the years. Then in the late 1940's the perforator met the fate of many of the perforators - replacement by a postage meter. So the company sent the perforator 175 miles to its mine in Kimberley, B.C. The perforator continued in use there up to 1956, when another postage meter caught up to it. For the perforator, it was a trip back to Trail. But it left its mark, for the stock of perforated stamps was large and continued in use past 1959. One estimate is that the supply was not exhausted until 1965.

The perforator, back in Trail, was demoted for a period to cancelling meal tickets used at the company cafeteria. What a drop down the ladder - from a responsible position in postal security to just punching meal tickets. About 1957 the perforator was donated to the Rossland Mining Museum located just outside of Trail.

A note to collectors: stamps issued during or before 1956 that had been perforated were used by the company after this date. Most cancels will be Kimberley, B.C. The "CMS" Perfin is known in post-1956 stamps and these must have been done on request, as the machine was officially retired.

G7.



G16.



In the case of the Great Northern Railway Perfin (G7), it was the stamps that took a long trip and the perforator that took a short, albeit fatal, trip. The Great Northern Perfin is one of eight U.S. railway Perfins found in Canadian stamps (only one was given Post Office approval - presumably the Great Northern never requested approval). The perforator was located in the Head Office in St. Paul, Minn. The closest major city in Canada is Winnipeg, Man., 450 miles north, where the stamps were purchased and sent to St. Paul for perforating.

The Great Northern had only one terminus in Canada, at New Westminster, B.C. To extend the Railway's postal security system to its only Canadian terminus, all of the Canadian stamps were forwarded close to 2,000 miles westward to supply the New Westminster office. This will explain why observant collectors have noticed so many stamps with Winnipeg tagging.

Sometime in 1963 or 1964 the perforator was sent out for, quote, "a major repair which included upgrading of the perforating dies," unquote. This upgrading spelled the doom of a Perfin that had started during the Admiral issue. When the perforator was returned, the die was changed completely, and subsequently was called "G16." The old perforator, under the guise of G16, was used until March 3rd, 1970. On that date the Great Northern Railway ceased to exist. It

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Great Northern Railway ceased to exist. It merged with the Northern Pacific, Burlington (Chicago, Burlington & Quincy) and the SP&S (Spokane, Portland & Seattle) to form the Burlington Northern Railway.

The author has been unable to trace the "GN" perforator, so cannot give either its make or model.

If you run across any information about a perforator, please take notes and pass them on to other collectors. It is the little tidbits that give a little spice to the hobby of collecting stamps in general and Perfins in particular.

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